

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**SPHERE  
UKRAINE**

**ATTACKED FOR  
DEFENDING LGBTQIA+  
& WOMEN'S RIGHTS**



# WRITE FOR RIGHTS

## 20 YEARS OF WRITING LETTERS THAT CHANGE LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

Twenty years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. Over the following years, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to 4.5 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2020, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. Together, these individuals have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, freeing them from torture, harassment or unjust imprisonment.

This year's campaign channels this support towards people targeted for their peaceful activism, views or personal characteristics. This includes LGBTQIA+ activists, environmental defenders and peaceful protesters. These individuals have variously been beaten, jailed, shot at, harassed and intimidated. Through Write for Rights, they will receive individual messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. They and their families know that their situations are being brought to public attention and they are not forgotten.

Alongside the letter writing actions, Amnesty also speaks to those who have the power to change these people's situations, such as politicians.

## BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity and any limitations. When participants want to take action on a case, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology allows participants to:



Amnesty International Taiwan letter writing event, December 2020.

countries. Write for Rights also gives visibility to these injustices through public events, and garners international attention on social media.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals, and other people and groups in a similar situation, by the country's authorities. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

**DEVELOP** key competences and skills

**HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY** to form their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

**TAKE CONTROL** of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

**HAVE THE SPACE** required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.

■ Read about the people we're fighting for: [www.amnesty.org/writeforrights](http://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)

■ Contact the Amnesty team in your country: [www.amnesty.org/countries](http://www.amnesty.org/countries)

■ Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R21

■ If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/)

■ Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign**: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn>



# YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL



## ACTIVIST FREED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Nassima al-Sada, a campaigner for women's freedom, was arrested in 2018 for peacefully defending human rights. While in jail, guards beat her and banned everyone – even her lawyer – from visiting her. But thanks to supporters worldwide who wrote a massive 777,611 letters, tweets and more, Nassima walked free in June 2021, and is back with her family and friends.

## FATHER OF THREE REUNITED WITH FAMILY

In April 2018, NGO worker and human rights defender Germain Rukuki was found guilty of a slew of sham charges and sentenced to 32 years in prison in Burundi. He was jailed before getting a chance to hold his youngest child, born just weeks after he was arrested. His family fled the country for fear of reprisals. On 30 June 2021, Germain was finally freed and reunited with his family, thanks in part to the more than 436,000 actions calling for his release.



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## ONE STEP CLOSER TO JUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Friends Popi Qwabe and Bongeka Phungula were murdered while heading for a night out in May 2017. Until recently, their families had been distressed by irregularities and delays in the police investigation. However, in March 2021, police revived the case after receiving 341,106 petition signatures from the families' supporters worldwide. The police have completed their investigation and handed over the case to the country's National Prosecuting Authority. "I feel optimistic," said Popi's sister Thembelihle. "I feel like finally, something is about to change."



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## ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries to be met only when practicalities allow.



*Amnesty International Benin letter writing event, December 2020.*



## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



## CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.

**Article 1** Freedom and equality in dignity and rights

**Article 2** Non-discrimination

**Article 3** Right to life, liberty and security of person

**Article 4** Freedom from slavery

**Article 5** Freedom from torture



## LEGAL RIGHTS

Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

**Article 6** All are protected by the law

**Article 7** All are equal before the law

**Article 8** A remedy when rights have been violated

**Article 9** No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile

**Article 10** Right to a fair trial

**Article 11** Innocent until proven guilty

**Article 14** Right to go to another country and ask for protection



## SOCIAL RIGHTS

Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.

**Article 12** Privacy and the right to home and family life

**Article 13** Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders

**Article 16** Right to marry and start a family

**Article 24** Right to rest and leisure

**Article 26** Right to education, including free primary education



## ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.

**Article 15** Right to a nationality

**Article 17** Right to own property and possessions

**Article 22** Right to social security

**Article 23** Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union

**Article 25** Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being



## POLITICAL RIGHTS

Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion

**Article 18** Freedom of belief (including religious belief)

**Article 19** Freedom of expression and the right to spread information

**Article 20** Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way

**Article 21** Right to take part in the government of your country



## CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS

Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

**Article 27** Right to share in your community's cultural life

**Article 28** Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized

**Article 29** Responsibility to respect the rights of others

**Article 30** No taking away any of these rights!

## ACTIVITY

END DISCRIMINATION AND  
HATE CRIMES

## KEY CONCEPTS

- Equality and non-discrimination
- Rights of LGBTQIA+ people
- Hate crimes

## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

In this activity, participants explore how general assumptions about people and groups can lead to discrimination and fuel violence, stigma and hate crimes. Participants will learn why guaranteeing the right to non-discrimination is particularly essential for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex, and that the state has responsibility for this. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write a letter to demand justice on behalf of Sphere and show solidarity with them.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** the concept of equality and non-discrimination, and how we make assumptions about people;
- **describe** the consequences of a violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination;
- **recognize** the role of the state in guaranteeing the right to non-discrimination;
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign and write letters in support of and showing solidarity with Sphere.

## 1. THREE TRUTHS AND A LIE

Give each participant a blank piece of paper and ask them to write their name and four pieces of information about themselves: three facts and one lie. For example, "Alfonse likes singing, has a dog, loves ice-cream and plays football".

Ask participants to form pairs, show each other the four pieces of information, and try to guess which of the "facts" is a lie. Ask them to meet another person and repeat.

The third time, get participants to find a partner with whom they should – instead of sharing their "facts" – discuss the following questions:

- Was it easy to spot the lie?
- How did you go about identifying or guessing which information was a fact and which was a lie?
- Did you make assumptions about the person? What kind of assumptions?
- Were your assumptions always correct?

Regroup and ask participants to share what they discussed in pairs. Write on a flip chart any assumptions that participants made about each other in order to identify what was a fact or lie.

AGE: 13+

## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes.

## MATERIALS

- **Background information: Rights of LGBTQIA+ people** (page 10)
- **Background information: Hate crimes** (page 13)
- **Handout: Sphere's story** (page 14)
- **Handout: Simplified UDHR** (page 5)
- Paper, pens, envelopes and stamps
- Flip chart

## PREPARATION

- Print copies of the handouts for each participant.

## FOLLOW COVID-19 MEASURES

Be sure to comply with public health advice in your area during the Covid-19 pandemic. Conduct your activity in a way that ensures the safety of all participants and respects any necessary physical distancing measures.

If you are doing the activity online:

- **Choose** a platform that provides participation and interaction while being secure
- **Adapt** the activity to allow for relevant reflections and debriefing (in small groups)
- **Provide** technical support for participants to allow for good participation.



15 MINUTES



Reflect with the participants on the following to discuss whether the assumptions we make about people are always correct:

- How people usually make assumptions about others based on characteristics such as a person's gender, age, skin colour, religion, sexuality, where they come from, or whether they have a disability.
- Many times, assumptions about certain groups are based on things we have learned or heard from the media, family and friends.
- It is important to recognize that we may make assumptions about people, often based on learned stereotypes and prejudices, which are unconscious.
- It is difficult to know people just by looking at them or by associating them with a group.

Explain how some assumptions about groups, when based on stereotypes and prejudices, can lead to discrimination against people associated with these groups. At times, this discrimination can even lead to unlawful acts of violence against these people or their property because of their real or perceived race, religion, gender, sexuality, etc.

■ **Discrimination:** Consciously or unconsciously treating someone unfairly or holding them to different standards on the basis of conscious or unconscious prejudiced beliefs and not on the basis of individual merit. It is the systematic denial of certain peoples' or groups' full human rights because of who they are or what they believe.

■ **Prejudice:** Judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them. Prejudice is often directed toward people in a certain identity group (based on race, religion, sexuality, gender, etc.). It usually has a negative connotation.

■ **Stereotype:** A fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing. If someone is stereotyped, people form a fixed general idea or image of them, so that it is assumed that they will behave in a particular way.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE

Ask participants:

- What assumptions are made about LGBTQIA+ people?
- What challenges and emotions do you think LGBTQIA+ people experience daily?

Explain to participants about the lived experiences of, and discrimination against, LGBTQIA+ people using the sheet **Background information: Rights of LGBTQIA+ people** (pages 10-12), or print and distribute copies.



10 MINUTES

## 3. MEET SPHERE

Explain to participants that they will be exploring a real story of a group of LGBTQIA+ people in Ukraine.

Divide the class into small groups. Distribute the three handouts:

- **Sphere's story** (page 14)
- **Simplified UDHR** (page 5)
- **Hate crimes** (page 13)

Ask them to read the information about Sphere and answer the following questions:

- Do you think Sphere and LGBTQIA+ people are treated fairly?
- If you were a member of Sphere, how would you want to be treated?
- Which article from the UDHR directly relates to discrimination? Why?
- Do you think what happened to Sphere is a hate crime?
- Which other human rights are violated because of the discrimination Sphere experiences? How does this situation affect members of Sphere and their personal, professional and social life?

Reconvene the group. Ask them to share their answers to stimulate a discussion. Explain to participants that discrimination can be embedded in practices, laws, policies and institutions.

Some groups such as women, black people, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and others, are more likely to be discriminated against and suffer from systemic discrimination. For example, women in many countries earn a lower wage because of their gender: this is systemic discrimination.

Conclude by explaining that Article 2 of the UDHR recognizes that:



25 MINUTES



*“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs”.*

You can display the Article in full or read it out loud slowly.

Explain that discrimination is a crosscutting theme in all human rights conventions. In addition, several UN human rights conventions protect specific groups of people against discrimination. These include the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Eradication of all forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (You can choose to explore together whether these conventions are ratified in your country.)

## 4. TAKE ACTION

Explain about Amnesty’s Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to demand justice for Sphere by calling on the Ukrainian authorities to investigate all the attacks against them. Give examples from last year’s campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be.

If there isn’t enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards, or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.



■ Show participants the video of Sphere which can be found here: [www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos](http://www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos) (available in English).

■ If you have time, you can share this five minute introductory video about Write for Rights: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/145/write-for-rights-a-short-guide>

### WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Minister of the Interior in Ukraine, using the contact information in the box to the right.

Participants can use the template letter on page 15 or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:

- Tell the Minister something about yourself.
- Tell the Minister what shocks you about the Sphere case.
- Ask the Minister to take all necessary steps to **ensure that the perpetrators of the attacks against Sphere are identified and held to account in fair trial proceedings, and that the discriminatory motive for the attacks is taken into account during the investigations so that the attacks are treated as hate crimes.**

Amnesty International Australia  
Locked Bag 23  
Broadway NSW 2007





## SHOW SOLIDARITY

Encourage participants to show solidarity with Sphere members by choosing one or more of the following actions:

1. Send photos that Sphere can place in PrideHub, their community centre. These can be photographs of people holding placards showing support for Sphere and LGBTQIA+ people in Kharkiv. These photos can be taken in locations that represent your city. You could take a photo in your school.
2. Sphere would also like to receive LGBTQIA+ flags (or other associated flags) signed by their senders. You could add something to the flag that would represent your location, such as your city's emblem.
3. Share photos of your actions on social media and tag @KharkivPride along with the hashtag #IStandWithSphere

**Sphere,**  
**PO Box 10399,**  
**Kharkiv, 61005,**  
**Ukraine.**

### LINKS TO THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Spherewa](http://www.facebook.com/Spherewa)

Twitter: [@KharkivPride](https://twitter.com/KharkivPride)

Instagram: [@kharkivpride](https://www.instagram.com/kharkivpride)

*Anna Sharyhina (left) and Vera Chernyhina (right), founders of Sphere.*



## HANDOUT

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## RIGHTS OF LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE

In many countries, being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTQIA+) means living with daily discrimination. This discrimination could be based on:

- your sexual orientation (who you're attracted to);
- your gender identity (how you define yourself, irrespective of your biological sex);
- your gender expression (how you express your gender identity through your clothing, hair or make-up);
- your sex characteristics (for example, your genitals, chromosomes, reproductive organs, or hormone levels).

From name-calling and bullying, to being denied a job or appropriate health care, the range of unequal treatment faced by LGBTQIA+ people is extensive and damaging. It can also be life-threatening.

Sometimes, LGBTQIA+ people are harassed in the streets, beaten up and even killed, simply because of who they are. A spate of violence against transgender people led to the deaths of at least 331 people worldwide between October 2018 and September 2019. Meanwhile, many intersex people around the world are forced to undergo dangerous, invasive and completely unnecessary surgeries that can cause life-long physical and psychological side effects.

Sometimes, hostility directed at LGBTQIA+ people is stoked by the very governments that should be protecting them. A state-sponsored campaign in the Russian region of Chechnya led to the targeting of gay men, some of whom have been abducted, tortured and even killed. In Bangladesh, LGBTQIA+ activists have been hacked to death by machete-wielding armed groups, with the police and government taking little interest in delivering justice to the families of victims. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, people continue to live in fear, hiding their LGBTQIA+ identities to avoid being attacked or even murdered.

Consensual same-sex sexual activity is a crime in 70 countries. In six countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen, it is punishable by death. And even where these restrictive laws are not enforced, their very existence reinforces prejudice against LGBTQIA+ people, leaving them with little protection against harassment, blackmail and violence.

LGBTQIA+ rights advocates have overcome enormous challenges and risks to their own personal safety to call out abuses of the human rights of LGBTQIA+ people, and force changes to laws that discriminate against them. From the introduction of the concept of Pride and global events like the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia & Transphobia (also known as IDAHOBIT), LGBTQIA+ people worldwide are forging alliances and promoting pride in who they are.

The collective efforts of activist organizations around the world has paid real dividends. Today, at least 43 countries recognize homophobic crimes as a type of hate crime. And as of December 2019, 27 countries have made same-sex marriage legal.

## HANDOUT

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## GLOSSARY

**LGBTQIA+:** A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex. There are many variations on this abbreviation in use. Amnesty International uses this one; other organizations and groups use different ones, depending on their members and the individuals they work with.

**LESBIAN:** a woman who is primarily physically, sexually and emotionally attracted to other women. It can refer to same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behaviour and same-sex cultural identity for women.

**GAY:** men or women who are primarily physically, sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. It can refer to same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behaviour and same-sex cultural identity. "Gay" is not gender-specific, in that it can refer to both men and women who experience same-sex sexual attraction or identify as such. However, in common usage, many people mean only gay men when they say "gay".

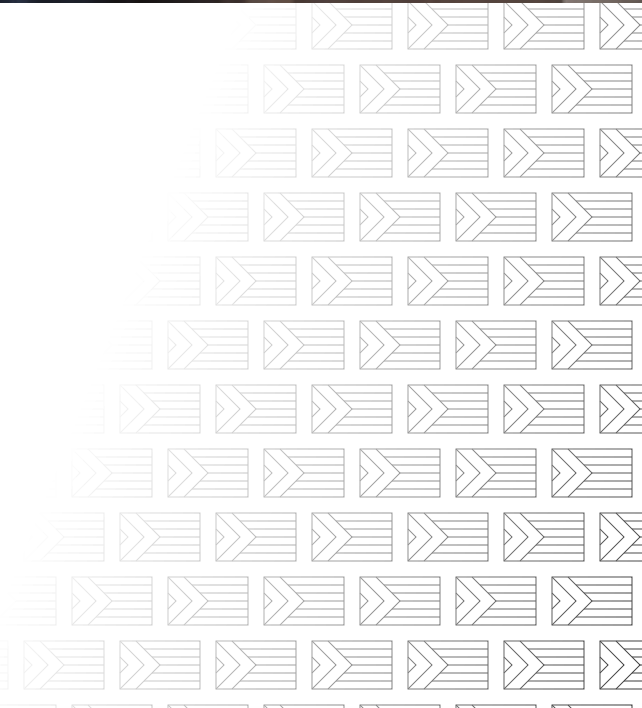
**BISEXUAL:** a person who is attracted to and/or has sex with both men and women. It can also refer to a cultural identity.

**TRANSGENDER:** individuals whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from the social expectations attached to the biological sex they were assigned at birth. Some people may choose to modify their biological sex to match their gender identity, either through surgery or hormonal treatments, and some may not. The term can include a wide range of other identities, such as members of third genders, as well as individuals who identify as more than one gender or no gender at all. The term transgender is often shortened to "trans".

**INTERSEX:** individuals who have genital, chromosomal or hormonal characteristics which do not correspond to the given standard for "male" or "female" categories of sexual or reproductive anatomy. Intersexuality may take many forms and covers a wide range of bodily characteristics. While it is hard to track how many people are born with physical, genetic or chromosomal characteristics that could be called intersex, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about one in every 2,000 children is born with a body that visibly differs from "typical" male or female, though not all of them will be identified as intersex, either at birth or later in life.



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## HANDOUT

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## PRIDE

Pride takes many forms – from carnivalesque marches, to film screenings and debates – and is a moment for LGBTQIA+ people and activists, their family members, friends, and allies to show that they are out and proud to be who they are.

Events are organized throughout the year, depending on where in the world you are. In the Americas and Europe, the season usually kicks off in June, while February to March is Pride season in South Africa.

Pride festivals are banned in several countries, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Uganda and most recently Turkey. Pride celebrates the LGBTQIA+ movement in all its diversity, and amplifies the call to respect and protect LGBTQIA+ rights.

## WHY ARE THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE IMPORTANT?

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects everyone's right to express themselves freely. Everyone should be able to express their pride in who they are and who they love.

Bringing an end to homophobia and transphobia will save lives. Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people puts them at a heightened risk of physical and psychological harm. Everyone has the right to life, freedom and safety.

By embracing LGBTQIA+ people and understanding their identities, we can learn how to remove many of the limitations imposed by gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are damaging across society, defining and limiting how people are expected to live their lives. Removing them sets everyone free to achieve their full potential, without discriminatory social constraints.

LGBTQIA+ people, especially transgender and gender non-conforming people, are often at risk of economic and social exclusion. Fighting for laws that are more inclusive of people regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity will allow them to access their rights to health, education, housing and employment.

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Anna Sharyhina and Vera Chernyhina, founders of Sphere

## HANDOUT

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## HATE CRIMES

The term “hate crime” is in some ways misleading since it does not require that the perpetrator has actual hatred towards the victim. Instead, hate crimes are defined by their discriminatory motive.

Hate crimes generally undermine a number of human rights of the victim. These may include the right to be free from discrimination as well as the rights to life, physical integrity, to be free from torture and other ill-treatment, and other rights, depending on the facts of the case.

When committed by state actors, hate crimes are human rights violations for which the state is directly responsible. States also have a positive duty to take appropriate measures and exercise due diligence to prevent, punish, investigate and redress the harm caused by hate crimes committed by private individuals.

Measures that states should take to prevent hate crimes include:

- ensuring that hate crimes are prohibited in law;
- diligently investigating any possible discriminatory motive for a crime;
- collecting data, disaggregated by type of crime and discriminatory motive, in order to inform the creation of better policies to prevent future hate crimes.

These measures can also help build confidence within targeted communities in the ability and willingness of the state to protect their rights. States should also take measures to counter stereotypes, eradicate discrimination and foster greater equality.



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## HANDOUT

## SPHERE'S STORY

Sphere NGO have been championing the rights of LGBTQIA+ people and women in Ukraine since 2006, and are among the oldest organizations of their kind in the country. Founded by activists Anna Sharyhina and Vira Chernygina, they provide a safe space for women and LGBTQIA+ people in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city.

Although Ukraine is considered one of the most progressive post-Soviet countries on LGBTQIA+ rights, it is still failing to address the growing rate of hate crimes. As groups targeting LGBTQIA+ people have proliferated across the country, Sphere has suffered numerous discriminatory attacks. These groups have set upon Sphere's supporters and premises, urinating on the walls, daubing faeces on the doorknobs, breaking windows and chanting homophobic slogans at them. There have been dozens of attacks like these. Anna and Vira report them to the police, but no one is held accountable.

In 2019, Sphere organized Kharkiv's first ever Pride event. Despite threats and intimidation, Sphere created a hugely successful event attended by up to 3,000 people. But the police failed to protect marchers from violence, instead joining in by hurling homophobic abuse. Anna and Vira say that police inaction in the face of constant attacks has left Sphere and its supporters in a permanent state of fear.

*"I want our attackers to be held accountable in accordance with the law"*

**Anna says.**

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© Kate Mamasur/Amnesty International

Top: Anna Sharyhina and Vera Chernygina, founders of Sphere  
Bottom: Vera Chernygina



## HANDOUT

## LETTER TEMPLATE

## SPHERE – UKRAINE

Ministry of Internal Affairs  
vul. Akademika Bohomoltsa, 10  
01601  
Kyiv  
Ukraine

Dear Minister

Sphere NGO in Kharkiv is one of the oldest LGBTQIA+ and women's rights NGOs in Ukraine. But as groups targeting LGBTQIA+ people have proliferated across the country, Sphere has endured dozens of discriminatory attacks. These include physical attacks, destruction of their property and homophobic chants hurled at supporters. I urge you to ensure that the attacks on Sphere – including the hate motive – are investigated, and those responsible are held to account in fair trials. Ukraine must build on its recent progress on LGBTQIA+ rights and end impunity for hate crimes.

Yours sincerely



# ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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